

Move Over Hard Drive

Apple Computer announced this week that they are planning on releasing a notebook computer by the end of the year that will be equipped with a flash drive instead of a standard hard drive. I know what your thinking, Big Deal! Well actually it really is a big deal for many reasons.

First, let me explain the differences between hard drives and flash memory. Flash memory is a solid state device that has no moving parts. Flash drives have very fast transfer rates and are generally very small in physical size. Capacity is currently their disadvantage. Most people carry a 512 Meg or maybe a 2 gig flash stick in their pocket. This is the same type of drive that you plug into your USB port so that you can backup pictures, music or your documents. These sizes are not nearly large enough to run the Windows operating system. There are manufactures that offer sizes all the way up to 64 gigs. However, these drives cost over \$600 so are not very economical yet. Memory prices, on the other hand, have been dropping like rocks, and I have no doubt that this same drive will be less than half that price in a year.

Hard drives by comparison are larger in physical size and are much slower when it comes to transferring data. This is because hard drives have moving parts. Data is stored on a platter that spins at 7200 rpms. Hard drives have a capacity that is much larger than flash drives. Most computers come equipped with an 80 to 250 gig hard drives that can cost as little as \$60. Certainly a much better value per megabyte over flash memory.

This will have a huge impact on laptop computers of the future. First, flash drives are smaller; this means laptops will be lighter and smaller in physical size. Second, flash drives are faster. Your current computer is slow during boot up because the hard drive has to transfer data into ram memory and then onto the processor. Flash drives will zip this data onto the processor at a much higher rate of speed translating into faster boot-ups. Lastly, because flash drives have no moving parts the failure rates are much lower. Have you ever dropped your laptop, or maybe just jarred it really hard? Most hard drives cannot withstand this type of punishment and will tend to fail.

The first computers equipped with flash drives will be in the higher priced systems. I speculate flash drives will start showing up in main stream computers late next year. If you are in need of computer help simply call the best technicians in the business. Call Thomas, Roger, or Aaron at the Computer Depot, 947-0749, or stop by and visit our new larger state of the art facility at 113 E. Emory Rd.